

ST. PAUL

AN HISTORICAL PLAY
IN THREE ACTS

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GEOFFREY DEARMER

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ST. PAUL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POEMS

THE DAY'S DELIGHT

THREE SHORT PLAYS



FRESCO OF ST. PAUL HOLDING A SCRIPT AND WEARING THE PALLIUM, THE USUAL DRESS OF PHILOSOPHERS, WITH A BOX CONTAINING ROLLS OF HIS LETTERS. FROM THE CATACOMB OF DOMITILLA, ROME.

(From G. Wilpert, Roma Sotterranea)

ST. PAUL

AN HISTORICAL PLAY
IN THREE ACTS

BY
GEOFFREY DEARMER



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ST. PAUL

CHARACTERS

ARETAS, King of the Nabataean Arabs

KRITIAS

ARISTION

LEMNIA, his sister

} Christians

BARAN, a spy in the service of ARETAS

PAUL

ANANIAS

ZABAD

MATTHIAS

} Jewish Christians

PETER

BARNABAS

TERTIUS

ONESIMUS

SEPTIMUS, a Roman soldier

LUKE

TIMOTHY

A CENTURION

A JAILOR

SIX GREEK GENTILES and Two JEWS OF ANTIOCH (four
men and four women)

All applications for permission to give amateur performances of the whole or part of this play must be made to the Secretary, Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers, 11, Gower Street, London, W.C. 1, and no performance may be given except under licence from the Society mentioned.

ACT I Damascus. Outside the house of JUDAS in
the Street called Straight. A.D. 36.
Morning.

ACT II A room in a house at Antioch A.D. 49
Evening.

ACT III Rome.

Scene 1. A room in PAUL's 'Own hired house.
A.D. 62. Evening.

Scene 2. A cell in the Carcer. A.D. 65.
Morning.

ST. PAUL

ST. PAUL has never been the popular hero of his deserts. The reason for this is probably that it is difficult to be on friendly terms with a man who always turns up at funerals. The half unconscious reaction to him in the popular mind is grim and dour, and associated inevitably with the service for the Burial of the Dead and "this vile body." The less imperfectly informed have also an idea that St. Paul hated women, preferred celibacy on principle, and went ranting about performing unlikely miracles with his eyes fixed on the Crown of Righteousness that awaited him Hereafter. Moreover, what he wrote was Scripture, and Scripture, since it may not be doubted, cannot be digested but must be swallowed whole. What man could contend against such odds as these ?

Dean Inge says in his *St. Paul in Outspoken Essays* :—

"The future history of the civilised world for two thousand years, perhaps for all time, was determined by his missionary journeys and hurried writings. It is impossible to guess what would have become of Christianity if he had never lived ; we cannot even be sure that the religion of Europe would be called by the name of Christ."

Is this a just claim ? We cannot be certain. But undoubtedly there are grounds for it, and the grounds alone are sufficient to stimulate into a lively acceptance

ears jaded by the drone of first principles and Second Lessons.

St. Paul is fully appreciated by few but theologians. But the fault is not wholly our own, for St. Paul was a letter writer who cared solely for those to whom he wrote and not at all for Posterity. He was not one of those literary Magogs whose first recognition is of themselves. The care of all the churches was his sole interest, and to this end he occasionally abandons the eternal (where he is so splendidly at home) for the temporary—which an infinitely lesser man could have accomplished. He pauses to deal with some gross offence, to repeat himself for the n th time, to answer some silly question with infinite patience, or to exhaust his not very limited vocabulary on those who relapse into Judaism.

We, straining over the barrier of Time, as we listen from the gallery of the twentieth century, are inclined to forget this. We give him—half unconsciously, perhaps—less credit, just where we should give him more. We want to hear the great genius talk about charity, and death in life, and life in death, and stars that differ in glory; we are impatient with the great man whose very strength and wisdom was his abandonment of that genius in his care for weakness and stupidity, who pleads that he is a fool that he may rope in other fools in his amazing comprehensiveness.

But what sort of a man was this who was so much braver than the soldiers, so much more sea-worthy than the sailors, and so much more godly than the theologians? Who was this expert who showed lawyers how to

plead and gave politicians a lesson in opportunity and poise ; who made even city magistrates look and feel extremely foolish, and a slave look suddenly wise ; who forgot to mention the young emperor who mattered but not an old woman who did not ; who was this Paul whom millions have listened to, but few have understood ?

THE PLAY

THE supreme difficulty of historical drama is to fuse sound history with "good theatre." Thespis takes from Clio a judicious selection of facts, and, without ever venturing to misrepresent a single one of these facts, applies her own emphasis and infuses a new vitality.

This vitality must be original, for when history has already been dramatized, as in the Gospels, and more especially in the Acts, any attempt to make one drama out of another (and one, moreover, far out of reach of the theatre) is doomed to failure. All a dramatist can do is to appreciate the characters he meets in the New Testament; and, if he has the ability to keep out of their way, to let them come to life for a moment in some place or places where we know they lived.

I am specially indebted to Dr. Streeter's *The Four Gospels* and the first two volumes of *The Beginnings of Christianity* by Dr. Foakes Jackson and Dr. Kirsopp Lake. Also without the guidance of Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Dr. A. H. McNeile's *St. Paul*, Professor Peake's and Bishop Gore's Commentaries on the Bible, Professor Oesterley's *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*, Professor H. Lietzmann's *Messe und Herrenmahl*, Mr. W. L. Knox's *St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem*, the works of Dr. Deissmann, Dr. Milligan, and especially the initiative, scholarship, and supervision of my Father, this play could not have been constructed or in any sense completed.

ACT I

ACT I

Outside the house of JUDAS in the covered, colonnaded Street called Straight at Damascus.

Morning.

A door centre back, benches left and right centre, above the actual road, forward.

[ARISTION runs on from actor's left. He peers off right, returns centre and beckons to his sister, LEMNIA. He is impulsive, emotional. LEMNIA is made of better stuff.]

ARISTION. Lemnia !

[LEMNIA enters, left.]

LEMNIA. Well ?

ARISTION. Let us wait here.

LEMNIA. As well wait at home.

ARISTION. If we go too far we cannot give warning. He must pass this way to the Synagogues.

LEMNIA. Where is Kritias ?

ARISTION. He went to the Gate of Aleppo in the hope of news. I have been watching the southern road.

LEMNIA. The South Gate can be seen from here.

ARISTION. That's why I want to stop here. [Sits] If Saul is coming, I wish he'd come.

[LEMNIA crosses and looks off right.]

LEMNIA [with her back to ARISTION] Saul crossed the Pharpas twelve and twenty hours ago.

ARISTION. Who told you that ?

LEMNIA. The same messenger who brought the news about Stephen. He came from Jerusalem along the caravan route from Magdala.

ARISTION. Was he accompanied ?

LEMNIA. He had a body of men with him, armed like himself with staves and cords. [*Turning impulsively*] How much longer must we wait, Aristion ?

ARISTION. Sit down, Lemnia, and rest while you may. [*She sits at his feet*] Delay breeds terror where no terror may be. Every hour of waiting lends colour to the faintest hope. Here's Kritias.

[KRITIAS, *a muscular, normally cheerful young man, runs on from the right.*]

LEMNIA. Any signs of him ?

KRITIAS. None. I begin to weary of this fire-eating Pharisee. He should have been here two days ago.

LEMNIA. Maybe it's all a rumour.

KRITIAS. It is no rumour. A Greek who was present at the death of Stephen arrived at dawn at the Gate of Aleppo.

ARISTION. How did he get here ?

KRITIAS. One man travels faster than a crowd. This fellow saw Stephen die.

LEMNIA. What had poor Stephen done ?

KRITIAS. The most dangerous thing it is possible for any man to do, he told the truth. Five of the synagogues at Jerusalem suborned men—you know the old trick, to bring the old charge——

ARISTION [*bitterly*] Blasphemy against Moses and against God.

KRITIAS. You don't need telling.

LEMNIA [*reminiscently*] He, too, should have held his peace.

KRITIAS. He drove them to fury with the truth. He showed how from Abraham the Jews denied the Holy Spirit and killed those who were sent to them. He told how Joseph was sold into Egypt, how Moses rejected in bondage, how they offered sacrifices to a golden calf and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. How even Solomon built a house for God as if the Most High dwells in temples made with hands. 'Heaven is my throne and Earth my footstool,' he said, 'what house will ye build me saith the Lord, and what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?'

ARISTION. Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets . . .

KRITIAS. He struck and struck again. He called the Sanhedrin 'stiff-necks.'

LEMNIA. So they are!

KRITIAS. 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,' he said. 'Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted, and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers, ye who have received the law as it was ordained by angels and have not kept it.'

ARISTION. The law given at Sinai by thousands of attending angels, what a sting there is in that!

KRITIAS. They were cut to the heart. They gnashed on him with their teeth.

LEMNIA. O horrible!

KRITIAS. The witnesses——

ARISTION. Witnesses !

KRITIAS. Who must cast the first stones, stripped off their garments and laid them at the feet of none other than Saul.

ARISTION [*rising*] What ! [*Crosses, right, in front of them*] The man who—— [*points*]

KRITIAS. Yes. They dragged Stephen out of the city as the law required, and they stoned him there.

ARISTION. Have we no case for a fight ? Must we lie down to this wanton waster of life, this Saul ? Kritias, I'm no soldier, but you are, why are you silent ?

KRITIAS. I have not finished yet.

[*LEMNIA rises.*]

LEMNIA. They stoned Stephen . . . ?

KRITIAS. Calling upon the Lord and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice : 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And when he had said this, he fell . . . asleep. [*Pause*] You see, Aristion.

ARISTION [*reflectively*] Lay not this sin to their charge.

KRITIAS. If Stephen pleaded for his enemies, what right have we to avenge him ?

LEMNIA. We should stand little chance of escaping alive if we did.

KRITIAS. It would be gratifying to kill Saul ; there's little I should like doing better, even now I do not know that I shall not see red. But when in all soberness I consider how Stephen echoed the words of our dying Lord, I am forced to be as harmless as a dove.

LEMNIA. And as wise as a serpent.

ARISTION. Are snakes wise enough to be wary of quick revenge ?

LEMNIA. To kill Saul would be madness. If we take the sword we shall perish with the sword, and what then shall become of our religion ?

KRITIAS. Stephen is the first to die for the Faith.

LEMNIA. The first to die, will there be others, think you ?

KRITIAS. Unless the Lord comes again and very soon, they may be many more. [*He sits.*]

ARISTION. O sufficient for the day ! Stephen . . . Stephen— [*Looks off right, sees nothing, turns impulsively*] The Sanhedrin had no right to slay him. They know well enough that Rome will not allow them to put any man to death. That is why we have enjoyed freedom from persecution since our Master rose again. Besides, the Pharisees have much in common with us. They believe in the resurrection of the body, in angels, in the Coming of the Kingdom and much more. They are too powerful in the Sanhedrin and too popular to allow the High-Priestly Sadducees a free hand to persecute us.

[*LEMNIA sits.*]

KRITIAS. What are you saying, Aristion ?

ARISTION [*sitting by them*] Isn't it obvious that our brother Stephen was executed without authority ?

LEMNIA. Pilate may once again have washed his hands.

ARISTION. If the Procurator had been concerned in this affair, we should have heard of it. No, Pilate would never have allowed the Sanhedrin to inflict death without

his authority. He grows daily more jealous of violence save when he is threatened or his authority questioned. He may have been in his palace at Cæsarea, he was not at Jerusalem.

KRITIAS. Nor his deputies ?

ARISTION. Nor his deputies. This persecution of us Greek-speaking Christians is due directly to that. Also, the Pharisees and Sadducees united against us are themselves a menace to him. Pilate could not have ignored this, had he been there, but was he there ? Where is Pilate ?

LEMNIA. Where, if it comes to that, is Saul ?

KRITIAS. Pilate may have returned and forced the Sanhedrin to recall him. If Pilate intervenes, it should go hard with Saul.

ARISTION. No doubt of that. Saul is the instigator. He went to Caiaphas. Caiaphas did not send for him. *He* made havoc of the Church, *he* entered into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison, *he* obtained authority to bring us bound to Jerusalem, he was not asked to do these things. If Pilate exacts a reprisal, what better scapegoat than Saul ?

KRITIAS. The Sanhedrin would not dare make a scapegoat of Saul.

LEMNIA. Why not ?

KRITIAS. Gamaliel, the learned doctor, would not let them. Saul was brought up at his feet. Both are Pharisees.

ARISTION. The Sanhedrin disregarded Gamaliel's advice when they executed Stephen. Don't you remember

what Gamaliel said, 'Refrain from these men'—meaning us—'and leave them alone; for if this council or this work be of men, it will come to naught, but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found to fight even against God.'

LEMNIA. If Gamaliel had not spoken those words, where would the Apostles be now?

ARISTION. Saul satisfies both parties, therein lies his strength. Let us not blind ourselves to the facts. Saul is a Greek-speaking Jew. Yet he is no Hellene like ourselves, but a Hebrew of the Hebrews, at home in both languages and welcomed by both Greek and Hebrew-speaking synagogues. Such an enemy is not to be despised.

KRITIAS. If we go bound to Jerusalem, let us go as one man.

ARISTION. Bound men and women need not be taken alive.

KRITIAS. Aristion, where is your courage?

LEMNIA. I wish Aretas of Arabia were not sovereign here in Damascus.

KRITIAS. Aretas is quite indifferent to us.

ARISTION. Aretas is friendly to the Jews. He will not be behindhand in aiding Saul.

KRITIAS. All the same he respects Rome, though he may not aspire to rest in the ample bosom of Tiberius. [*He rises*] We must dally here no longer. Saul may be even at the South Gate of the city. I will go to meet him. [*Moves right.*]

[*All rise.*]

He may listen to reason. You, Aristion, stand by the

wall above the house of Simon and warn the brethren to make ready. Lemnia, you come with me.

LEMNIA [*to KRITIAS*] Are you sure you can trust yourself to argue with this man, you bright-eyed lover of danger ?

KRITIAS. You can trust me, I know that he who takes the sword——

LEMNIA [*smiling*] That applies to a stout stick, remember. If you are born a soldier, it is sometimes hard to be a Christian.

ARISTION. It isn't easy if you aren't born a soldier.

LEMNIA [*to KRITIAS*] Especially when Saul must be a soldier too.

ARISTION. A shooting star that flashes and is gone, and we with him.

KRITIAS. I am not so sure of that. True that beyond measure Saul persecutes the Church and wastes it, but there is something about him that I respect.

ARISTION. You won't respect him for long.

KRITIAS. His zeal, his power, his willingness to undertake this long journey to Damascus. With such a man on our side, what could we not accomplish !

ARISTION. Well, he is not on our side.

KRITIAS. They say his eyes burn like fire and that his hands are swift to urge and hold.

ARISTION. And *you* say we mustn't dally and then stand and dream, you jelly-back. Look over there, on the horizon ! [*Points off right.*]

[*They follow his gaze.*]

KRITIAS. Come, Aristion.

[KRITIAS, followed by ARISTION and LEMNIA, go off right.]

[There is a pause.]

[ARETAS IV, a powerful man of sixty, enters left. ARETAS has now been King of the Nabatæan Arabs for nearly forty years. Josephus tells us that under him the Nabatæan Kingdom extended from the Euphrates to the Dead Sea. St. Paul mentions him (2 Cor. II, 32) in connection with his 'ethnarch' or governor from whose hands the Apostle escaped in a basket. He is eccentric, relentless, very sarcastic, quick-tempered, shrewd and virile. With him is BARAN, a spy in his service.]

ARETAS. And where is Pilate now ?

BARAN. The Procurator is on board ship, O King. He is bound for Rome, where he will stand his trial before the Emperor.

ARETAS. H'm. [Sits] And what or who was the cause of Pilate's downfall ?

BARAN. One of these new messiahs, O King Aretas.

ARETAS. A messiah !

BARAN. An imposter, of course. This fellow summoned an armed multitude of Samaritans to Mount Gerizim.

ARETAS. An armed multitude ! What can have made soldiers of Samaritans ?

BARAN. The prospect of loot, O King. This fellow promised to find the sacred vessels which Moses is said to have hidden on the mountain. Pilate followed and executed the messiah and his ringleaders. The people

of Samaria appealed against the oppression. Their sole object in bearing arms, they said, was to avoid the oppression of Pilate. Vitellius allowed the appeal and sent Pilate to Rome for trial.

ARETAS. Even a multitude of worms will turn.

BARAN. It is, however, unlikely that Pilate will arrive before the apotheosis of the divine Tiberius.

ARETAS. That is the worst of a divine emperor, he dies.

BARAN. There is talk already of his adopted heir, one Gaius, a great-grandson of the divine Augustus. The soldiers call him Caligula or Little Boots.

ARETAS. None but the licentious soldiery would be allowed to call a god by a nickname. Baran, have you ever heard of one Jesus of Nazareth ?

BARAN. I specialize in messiahs, O King. There was Theudas and Judas and Jesus and——

ARETAS. You are very talkative for a spy, Baran. Tell me about Jesus.

BARAN. The particular messiah you mention was executed under Pilate.

ARETAS. That is interesting, very interesting. What is the name of the messiah you spoke of just now, the one who caused the downfall of this detested Pontius Pilate ?

BARAN. His name, if ever known, is already forgotten, O King.

ARETAS. Forgotten—he who deserves their eternal gratitude—forgotten and Jesus of Nazareth remembered. What irony, what irony !

BARAN. These Christians——

ARETAS. Christians ?

BARAN. That is what we call them at Antioch.

ARETAS. Do you ? Then we will call them Christians here. The people of Antioch are masters of ridicule, it is their one talent.

BARAN. These Christians are blindly devoted to their master and all that he taught.

ARETAS. But he's dead.

BARAN. They say he rose again.

ARETAS [*simply*] Oh !

BARAN. Their creed is one which I, as a student of theology, find extremely interesting.

ARETAS. No doubt. Has this religion of theirs any ' chance of surviving ' ?

BARAN. None whatever, O King. It is wholly impractical and infinitely difficult.

ARETAS. Why, then, does it attract you ?

BARAN. It despises wealth, I have none. It scorns to use the sword, I can't use the sword. It exalts the humble and weak, as the King knows, I am humble, poor, weak——

ARETAS. I begin to understand you, Baran. I, too, am forced to render honour where honour is due ; for had it not been for the first of the Christians, I should not have come here at this extremely uncomfortable hour of noon.

BARAN [*exasperated*] Will not the King tell me exactly why he has come ?

ARETAS. All in good time, Baran. There is as yet no sign of our visitor from Jerusalem. You are, I think,

a stranger to Damascus, the Pearl of Syria. Let me show you some of the sights.

[ARETAS rises. BARAN reluctantly follows him about.]

ARETAS. That river [*points off left*] is the Abana. The marvellous fertility of this oasis is due to her waters. The Christians, as you call them, use that particular pool [*jerks his thumb over his shoulder in a northerly direction, left*] for their rite of initiation, which is watery though otherwise inoffensive. The Abana rises on the slopes of the Great White Hebron—[*points half-right over the audience*] flows East and eventually loses itself in the desert as most other rivers lose themselves in the sea. You coming from Antioch will not realize that the Southern Gate of Damascus can be seen from here. [*Moves centre and points off right*] I am interested in the Southern Gate at the moment, for I am given to understand that a certain Jew of Tarsus by name of Saul——

BARAN. A citizen of no mean city.

ARETAS. You *are* a traveller, Baran ; is coming to rid Damascus of these Christian rats. Not that I feel strongly about them ; we Arabians are an orderly and therefore not a religious people. But I need the alliance of the Jews and expressly desire a good report of me taken to Jerusalem. That, briefly, is why I have brought you here, Baran.

BARAN. But why me, O King ?

ARETAS. You will stop Saul, and prepare him for audience.

BARAN. But how shall I know him, O King ?

ARETAS. Don't be a greater fool than you can help,

BARAN. This keen and forceful Pharisee has a presence. He will matter one day. If I befriend him before his star has risen, I am his friend for life.

BARAN. King Aretas can snap his fingers at the Jews.

ARETAS. That would be suicide, Baran. I am not strong enough to engage the Roman forces, but as long as the Jews are friendly, I am strong enough to make Vitellius, the mighty Roman Legate of Syria, refrain from fighting me.

ARISTION [*an approaching cry off*] Saul is coming !

[*Footsteps. ARISTION enters right, runs across and exit.*]

ARISTION [*a receding cry off*] Saul is coming !

[*ARETAS looks off, right.*]

ARETAS. I can see no one. Baran, stand and watch here. I would not have Saul know that I have felt constrained to come to meet him.

[*He passes in front of BARAN, who stands helpless.*]

BARAN. But, King Aretas, what shall I say to this man ?

ARETAS. You will identify him and present him to me, fool.

BARAN. I can't speak Hebrew, O King—Greek and Latin yes, but Hebrew, no.

ARETAS. Think you he'd come here hunting Christians if he had no Greek ? Keep your eye on the path beneath you.

[*BARAN runs right and starts.*]

Well, what see you ?

[*BARAN returns.*]

BARAN. A weary and wasted man leaning on the arm of a boy.

ARETAS. Question him. Find out if he has seen Saul and bring him to me, in the shade of that tree by the river. D'you hear ?

BARAN. I will obey, O King.

[Exit ARETAS, left. BARAN, still in a flustered state, sees a blind man approach and runs left to tell ARETAS, then hesitates and turns facing right.]

[SAUL, blind and staggering and leaning on the shoulder of a small boy, enters right. They move centre, when the boy, recognizing the house of Judas, takes SAUL's hand and leads him in that direction.]

BARAN. Here—you—— *[The boy takes no notice]*
Come here, I say.

[The BOY reluctantly leads SAUL forward and turns him facing BARAN.]

BARAN. Have you seen . . . *[He sees that SAUL is blind, with a curse he takes him roughly by the shoulders, peers into his face and throws him aside]* Blind ! What in the name of Dusaris is the good of such ! Take him away, away out of my sight.

[He resumes his watch on the South as the BOY takes SAUL to the door of the house of Judas and leads him in.]

[Re-enter ARETAS, BARAN turns.]

ARETAS. Well, what did he say ?

BARAN. He did not speak, O King.

ARETAS *[angrily]* Did not speak ! You asked him if he had seen Saul and he did not speak !

BARAN. I asked him not, O King.

ARETAS [*furious*] You did not. [*Seizes him by the throat.*]

[*BARAN sinks on his knees.*]

Traitor and slave, you dare to disobey me. You plot against me.

BARAN [*choking*] I am loyal——

ARETAS. Loyal—I'll have you flayed alive for this—why were you silent ?

BARAN. The fellow had seen no one, O King.

ARETAS. You lie, you dog.

BARAN. He—had—seen—no—one, O King, he was—blind !

ARETAS [*releasing him*] Blind ?

BARAN. That boy was leading him—in there.
[*Points.*]

ARETAS. So. Whose house is that ?

BARAN. I know not.

[*He rises. ARETAS, pushing past him again looks off, right.*]

ARETAS. Not a soul approaches. The deserted road bakes in the eternal noon. I'll wait here no longer to be the sport of rumour. We've been fooled, Baran. Come, follow me.

[*Exit left.*]

BARAN [*as he follows the KING off*] We've been fooled—I like that.

[*KRITIAS, followed by LEMNIA, enter, right.*]

KRITIAS. I saw him come this way.

LEMNIA. Are you sure ?

KRITIAS. Two men who were with him testified.

LEMNIA. Of what ?

KRITIAS. Of the miracle. Some said they saw a light, others said they saw nothing. Some said they heard a voice, others said they heard nothing.

LEMNIA. But what did *he* see, what did *he* hear?

KRITIAS. Who should know but Saul himself?

[*Enter ARISTION, running, from left.*]

ARISTION. He's in there. [*Points at house.*]

KRITIAS. The house of Judas.

ARISTION. And Ananias with him.

KRITIAS. Ananias is one of us.

ARISTION. So I thought. If Saul has letters for Ananias, we must intercept them. Saul with a band is one thing, Saul blind and alone is another.

LEMNIA. Alone?

ARISTION. His men have scattered. None dare go to the synagogues. None but Saul carry authority. Let us enter the house and see for ourselves. He may escape into the narrow street——

LEMNIA. Wait!

ARISTION. There is no time to lose—Ananias may take the letter. Quick! [*Runs to the door.*]

VOICE OF ANANIAS. Saul!

LEMNIA [*down-stage*] The voice of Ananias.

VOICE. Brother Saul!

ARISTION. You heard that? Ananias has gone over to the enemy. I'll not stand here——

LEMNIA. Wait! [*She runs to him.*]

[KRITIAS *moves up right to door.*]

VOICE. Brother Saul, receive thy sight.

The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou

shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

ARISTION. What does this mean ?

KRITIAS. Hath chosen thee—that thou shouldst know his will——

LEMNIA. And see that Just One——

ARISTION. Can he have seen a vision of our Master, he and not we ?

KRITIAS. Saul has been brought over to us.

LEMNIA. To be a witness unto all men—mark that, Kritias.

KRITIAS. A witness unto all men.

LEMNIA. With such a man on our side . . .

KRITIAS. What could we not accomplish !

ARISTION. We can't accept him——

VOICE OF ANANIAS. And now why tarriest thou ? Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

KRITIAS. Baptized !

[SAUL, now seeing and steady, but still weak, enters from the house, led by ANANIAS, who leads him down centre. SAUL is conscious only that he sees. As they move down, the three Christians do not move.]

[SAUL is led out left. ARISTION runs forward and looks off left. After a pause, he beckons to the others, who join him. All three stand staring off.]

[They turn their eyes away as SAUL and ANANIAS pass out of sight.]

ARISTION. Let us follow.

KRITIAS. Welcome our new friend.

LEMNIA. Not so fast.

[She runs in front of and restrains them.]

KRITIAS. Why not, Lemnia ?

LEMNIA. No, I say.

KRITIAS. He may be lonely.

LEMNIA. He would be alone.

ARISTION. Come, Kritias.

LEMNIA. No, I say. Can't you understand ? His ears are still deafened by the Voice, his eyes are still dazzled by the Light. I pray you join me in the house.

[She passes between them.]

ARISTION. What for ?

LEMNIA. I go to prepare meat for him.

[She goes into the house. After a moment's hesitation KRITIAS and ARISTION, whispering together, follow.]

ACT II

ACT II

A.D. 49

[A room in a house at Antioch. On the raised floor, back, lies the Sigma, a large semi-circular stuffed cushion against which, seated on other cushions hidden from view by the Sigma itself, the diners at the Agape will subsequently recline. Forward two benches.]

[Enter left ZABAD followed by MATTHIAS, two Jewish Christians from Jerusalem. Both are Pharisees; ZABAD is sly and persuasive, MATTHIAS clean-shaven, dark and sinister, an extreme and violent Judaizer. He carries a roll of papyrus. Both are dressed for a journey.]

ZABAD. This is the room where they will eat.

MATTHIAS. I doubt your wisdom in bringing me here.

ZABAD. You know not these three men as I do, Matthias.

MATTHIAS *[sitting]* Zabad, when I have sticks to break, I break them across my knee, one by one, so——
[Demonstrates.]

ZABAD. There is no hope of breaking Paul. *[Sits.]*

MATTHIAS. I know that, Zabad. Paul would wreck Israel on the cross of our Messiah. But that is no reason why we should not break Peter and Barnabas separately!

ZABAD. You know not Paul, Matthias. Break Peter and Paul will mend him while you are breaking Barnabas. Break Barnabas and Paul will mend *him* while you are

breaking Peter. Our only chance is to drive a wedge between Paul and the other two here, to-night, and take them back to Jerusalem before the [*contemptuously*] Apostle to the Gentiles can remake his plans. Once out of Paul's sight, we can influence Peter and Barnabas.

MATTHIAS. Zabad, you have been here for fifteen days ; I have not been here an hour ; what have you done ?

ZABAD. I have kept Peter [*indicating Sigma*] from this. Not once since I came here fifteen days ago has he sat at meat with Gentiles. Matthias, this question of food must be the wedge between Peter and Paul.

MATTHIAS. We must hammer it in. We have gathered strength since Paul and Barnabas returned from their mission tour.

ZABAD. Paul contemplates a second journey and a third.

MATTHIAS. Let him win at the Conference first. You know Zabad, James our Chief has altered since he summoned Paul and Barnabas, and Peter and John to that private meeting at Jerusalem not long before Paul left for his journey. True, he gave to Paul the 'right hand of fellowship' on that occasion, but his hand was as limp as Paul's hand was firm.

ZABAD. I knew not that James had ever expressed approval of Paul's mission to the Gentiles.

MATTHIAS. Nor I until James told me so himself. Confession forestalls criticism, you know, Zabad.

ZABAD. You think he regrets the permission he gave Paul ?

MATTHIAS. He could not have withheld it, for, mark

you, Peter, though he went only amongst Jews, was with Paul in spirit. Yet I believe that James, though he has not confessed as much, hates the movement as much as we do. And I am convinced that if we can convert Peter, who is an extremely susceptible old man, after all, and Barnabas, who is a keen Jew, James will stand with us.

ZABAD. And the day be ours.

MATTHIAS. All are watching James.

ZABAD. We must do our best to make Peter ours, but we shall not break Paul.

MATTHIAS. We cannot break him, but we can overwhelm him.

ZABAD. How ?

MATTHIAS. Leave that to me. Where is Peter ?

ZABAD. I have sent word to him and to Barnabas. I have told them of your sudden arrival and our return to Jerusalem to-night. I have begged them to come here.

MATTHIAS. And Paul ?

ZABAD. The Apostle to the Gentiles will come at his own time [*indicating Sigma*] to eat with the Greeks.

MATTHIAS. The man is a law unto himself !

ZABAD. And as hard as his hands. He used to sit up all night making tents of goats' hair.

MATTHIAS. I hate his cursed industry. When Peter comes, go to the lower room ; should Paul arrive, delay him for a while ; then fetch Barnabas.

ZABAD. Very well . . . Hist, here is Peter.

[*PETER enters right. He is getting old, his short beard and woolly hair are grey.*]

[MATTHIAS moves centre to meet him.]

[ZABAD rises.]

MATTHIAS. James, the brother of our Lord, and Head of the Church at Jerusalem, sends greetings to Peter, the greatest of all the Apostles.

PETER. How is our brother ?

MATTHIAS. He is well.

PETER. Are you not Matthias the Pharisee ?

MATTHIAS. Paul and James are Pharisees, and so am I. Peter, I have come to summon the Apostles at Antioch to a conference at Jerusalem to consider whether it is necessary for Gentile converts to become Jews and to keep the law of Moses.

Peter. Let us sit down.

[PETER and MATTHIAS move and sit. ZABAD goes out, left.]

MATTHIAS. Zabad and I must return to Jerusalem at dawn if not earlier. Will you not come with us ?

PETER. Paul speaks to-morrow in the synagogue. I cannot leave with him until the day after.

MATTHIAS. But why not leave without him ?

PETER. We are of one mind, Paul and I.

MATTHIAS. O, so you have come here to eat with Paul ?

PETER. No, I eat only with Jews.

MATTHIAS. That was not your custom when Zabad came here fifteen days ago. As you please [*rises*]. If you come not with us, we shall report your defection in this matter.

PETER. If I chose once to eat with Gentiles, what is that to you ?

MATTHIAS. If we at Jerusalem behaved after the manner of Paul we should soon be dead. You, Peter, are the Apostle to the Circumcision, what is Paul's mission to you or yours to Paul? Come with us, we must not let the Faith perish by perishing ourselves.

PETER. Waste not your breath in trying to frighten me, Matthias. I'll not leave Paul here because he is dangerous.

MATTHIAS. It is not a question of danger but of duty. Paul has work here, and there is work for you at Jerusalem before the conference. Come with us, or stay and eat with the Gentiles.

PETER. I tell you——

MATTHIAS. We shall not give you the benefit of the doubt, Peter.

PETER. I will not come with you.

MATTHIAS. Wait till you know what I know.

[PAUL enters, right. *There is nothing improbable in the 'Acts of Paul and Thekla' description of the Apostle, as 'short and bald with a hook nose and beetling brows.' But as he is now not yet fifty, and in full vigour, he need not be bald.*]

[MATTHIAS goes to meet him centre. PETER remains seated.]

PAUL. Matthias, my kinsman. [Embraces him.]

[N.B.—The embrace or 'holy kiss' of the Epistles was a real kiss on the cheek, friendly, dignified and spontaneous.]

PAUL. Have you eaten and rested?

MATTHIAS, I hope to eat with Zabad and Peter.

PAUL. So be it. I had thought when Zabad told me that Peter had joined us . . . let us not quarrel. Rest here awhile, Matthias, and tell me how fares the Church at Jerusalem, the Elders, and James the brother of our Lord ?

MATTHIAS. Paul, I have come to ask for your support at the coming conference at Jerusalem.

PAUL. What would *you* preach ?

MATTHIAS. That it is necessary for all Christian converts to become Jews and to keep the Law of Moses.

PAUL. [*breaking away*] O wretched man that I am ! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death !

[*Enter, left, BARNABAS, followed by ZABAD. BARNABAS, who was called Jupiter at Lystra, no doubt was tall and striking, wore a beard and suggested the Olympian Zeus of Pheidias. Unlike the others, he is richly dressed and rarely talkative. ZABAD goes to MATTHIAS and sits between him and PAUL.*]

PAUL. Barnabas, the Judaizers have come. Speak to Matthias, tell him what we did on our journey.

BARNABAS. Paul and I admitted Gentiles without circumcision and without full obedience to the law.

ZABAD. You see Matthias they are against us.

[*PETER is seated left, out of the discussion.*]

MATTHIAS [*to PAUL*] You would neglect the law ?

PAUL. If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

MATTHIAS. Paul——

ZABAD [*in MATTHIAS's ear*] Wait !

MATTHIAS. You speak as though the law were dead.

PAUL. I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I but Christ lives in me, and as death has no more dominion over Christ, neither has death dominion over me. [*Sits.*]

MATTHIAS. Learned sophistry. You dare to speak as though the law were evil.

PAUL. The law is a curse from which Christ has redeemed us ; for it is written ‘cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.’

MATTHIAS [*outraged*] And the law is sin, I suppose.

PAUL. I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust except the law had said ‘Thou shalt not covet.’ I was without sin once like a beast of the field till I knew sin and became a man. But I had to become a man, to become more than a man——

MATTHIAS. O, so you are a God now !

PAUL. Nay—but when Christ lives in me I am a spirit, for Christ is dead unto sin. But when I became a man as I had to become a man to become a spirit, sin slew me and I died. The law slew me and I died as I had to die to live ; wherefore the law is holy and just and good, and the commandment which was ordained to life was found to be unto death.

MATTHIAS [*to ZABAD*] What is this tangled foolishness ? Paul, are we to suppose that you are not carnal ?

PAUL. Nay, I am carnal. When the spirit dwells not in me and I do that which I would not. I am sold unto sin and the wages of sin is death. Then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. Then am I brought back into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

ZABAD [*to* MATTHIAS] You see how the spider weaves these poor flies in the gossamer of his arguments. Believe me, Matthias, he always has his answer ready.

MATTHIAS. Paul, are you a Hebrew ?

PAUL. I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

MATTHIAS. Why, then, do you behave like a Gentile amongst Gentiles ?

PAUL. I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some.

ZABAD [*to* MATTHIAS] There, you see !

MATTHIAS. Paul, you say that a man is not justified by the works of the law.

PAUL. By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

MATTHIAS. Very well, by what then shall we be justified ?

PAUL. By the faith of Christ.

MATTHIAS. But Christ is dead unto sin, whereas when the spirit dwells not in us, as you say, we are both sinful and alive.

PAUL. That is so.

MATTHIAS. But Christ is our minister.

PAUL. And we members of his body.

MATTHIAS [*triumphantly*] And we are sinners. Therefore Christ is the minister of sin.

PAUL. Nay, for when I sin, I build again the dead self I destroyed. And if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

ZABAD [*to* MATTHIAS] You see !

PAUL. Even as you, Zabad, urged Peter to make himself a transgressor, by building again the partition between us and the Gentiles which he himself destroyed; for before you came from James he did eat with the Gentiles, but when you were come he withdrew.

PETER. I was carried away by Zabad's dissimulation.

MATTHIAS. And will you eat with Paul and his publicans to-night ?

PETER. I will.

ZABAD. Is my work to be wasted ?

MATTHIAS [*to* PETER] You may eat of meat sacrificed unto idols. How will you know what you eat ?

PETER. I shall not know. I shall ask no questions.

MATTHIAS. What if the Jews amongst you discover ?

PETER. If any man say ' This was offered in sacrifice unto idols,' then will I not eat. If I offend my brother by eating meat, I will eat no flesh while the world stands.

ZABAD [*to* MATTHIAS] He got that from Paul, I know.

MATTHIAS [*to* ZABAD] You told me you had him.

ZABAD. So I had, but he is clay in Paul's hands. Now is the time to strike, for Peter is always at his weakest when he appears most strong. Strike, not at Paul, but at Peter; and strike hard.

[MATTHIAS *rises, moves centre and unrolls his piece of papyrus.*]

MATTHIAS. I have brought from Jerusalem, written

down on this strip of papyrus, some sayings of our Lord.

PAUL [*rising*] What need have we of written words when very soon the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise, and we who are alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

MATTHIAS. The Second Coming may not be as soon as you think. These sayings were written down by some unknown disciple. You doubt them, have we not Peter here ? If, then, Peter confirm what is written here, who shall deny it ?

PAUL. We know what Peter knows.

MATTHIAS. You know what Peter has told you. But memory may deceive.

PETER. All I know I have told unto Mark. He will preach what I have preached, word for word, as I remember. When I am dead, if I die before the Lord's return, Mark will be alive, and Mark before he dies will tell another of the Gospel, so shall it continue till the world's end.

MATTHIAS. If the Lord comes not soon, a time must come when the Gospel shall be written down.

PETER. What is written is corruptible. Paul has spoken of men with itching ears ; so are there scribes with itching pens. If, while I live, Mark wrote down what I have told him, any lewd fellow might corrupt the text of his speech and mine. But we impart what we remember of our Master's teaching to the incorrupt-

ible, even to the Apostles. So shall it be till the world's end.

PAUL. Seek not to frighten us with your written-on roll, Matthias, for in so seeking you shall weary us. [*Sits.*]

MATTHIAS. As you will. I know its content. The roll deals with but a few sayings and fewer incidents. But what there is, is pertinent to this matter.

PAUL. Seek not to weary us.

MATTHIAS. Peter, it is written here how when Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto him saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil'—what did Jesus say?

PETER. He said to her, 'Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto dogs.'

MATTHIAS. That is written here, but here is also written how before he spoke those words Jesus said, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Did our Lord say that?

PETER. I do not remember.

MATTHIAS. But the woman answered, 'Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table.'

PETER. In very truth that is so.

MATTHIAS. And Jesus cried, 'O woman, great is thy faith,' and her daughter was made whole.

PETER. Yes.

MATTHIAS. Let the dogs eat of the crumbs, who are

the dogs but the Gentiles. [PAUL *rises*] Does the Master say, 'Let the dogs eat with us'; nay, he says, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'

PETER [*impressed*] It may be so.

MATTHIAS. Again, it is written here how the Messiah said, 'I came not to destroy the Law of the Prophets, but to confirm.'

PAUL. Nay, to fulfil.

MATTHIAS. 'Until Heaven and Earth pass away' (he said) 'no jot or tittle shall pass from the Law until all things come to pass.'

PAUL. Have I not affirmed that the Law is holy?

MATTHIAS. So you believe that? It is well, for it is written here how the Messiah said, and doubtless of such as you, Paul, 'Whosoever therefore shall relax one of the least of these precepts, and teach men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven.' Answer that if you can.

PAUL. I am the least of the Apostles. God hath sent forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed unto death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake.

MATTHIAS. 'But whosoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.'

PAUL. Should I not know that? I who am not worthy to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the Church of God.

ZABAD [*in the ear of MATTHIAS*] Keep out of his clutches, you fool, or we are lost.

MATTHIAS [*to PAUL*] You have ears and will not hear. But you will listen to this. For it is written—in Hebrew, for all to read how the Messiah says, ‘Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, for verily I say unto you ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the son of man is come.’

[*PAUL comes forward and faces MATTHIAS and ZABAD.*]

PAUL. Ye busybodies and tattlers speaking things which ye ought not.

MATTHIAS. Is the truth not to be spoken?

PAUL. The truth!

MATTHIAS. I appeal unto Peter; he was no apostle by revelation.

[*He hands PETER the document. PETER and BARNABAS peruse it.*]

PAUL. Ye false brethren——

MATTHIAS [*furious*] False brethren. Fellow——

ZABAD. Hold! [*Pointing to PETER and BARNABAS, who must not be distracted from the roll*] Be quiet [*sotto voce*], we are winning.

PAUL. Ye false brethren brought in unawares, who come in privily to spy out our liberty in Christ Jesus, that ye may bring us to bondage; shall I give place to you by subjection? No, not for an hour.

MATTHIAS. It is not meet to take the bread of Israel and cast it unto dogs.

PAUL. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment

unto victory and in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

MATTHIAS. The Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory and they who followed him shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Irsael. Where, then, shall be the apostle to the Gentiles ?

PAUL. Be gone, tempt not us ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God with your doubtful disputations.

MATTHIAS. Wait, wait till the council, you turn-coat Pharisee.

PAUL. Though my bodily presence is weak and my speech contemptible, I fight not as one that beateth the air.

BARNABAS. Matthias, does James know of this ?
[*The roll.*]

MATTHIAS. Assuredly.

PETER. Much therein is true: and yet 'Into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not,'—were that true, would the Lord have sent me to Joppa even as he sent Philip ? Nevertheless, I am troubled by the words, 'Whosoever therefore shall relax one of the least of these precepts,' for that is what we Jews who have eaten with Gentiles have done.

[ZABAD goes to PETER and BARNABAS.]

ZABAD. Peter and Barnabas, come to Jerusalem, see James and the Elders before the Conference. We will settle this question in the light of what Matthias has told us.

PETER. I would not desert Paul.

BARNABAS. Nor I.

ZABAD. You desert him not. We shall all meet in a few days. That you have eaten with Gentiles matters little, since you did not know. But now that you do know what the Lord expressly commanded, will you disobey ?

PETER. Very well. Paul, I would seek the opinion of the Elders about this matter.

BARNABAS. And I.

PAUL. Peter—you ! And you, Barnabas ?

BARNABAS. I go with Peter.

PAUL. Even you, Barnabas, who first took me to the apostles, are carried away. Barnabas, the first to be named amongst the founders of the Gentile Church. Barnabas and Peter, who seemed to be pillars.

BARNABAS. We shall not desert you at the Conference.

ZABAD [*to himself*] Who knows.

BARNABAS. It is not always expedient for a man to practice what he preaches. I am a Levite of Cyprus, zealous for the law ; and if Peter, who was not sent to the Gentiles, has occasion to honour his Jewish brethren, all the more should I.

PAUL. All the less should you, since you *were* sent to the Gentiles.

BARNABAS. This question of food is no light question.

PAUL. Meats for the belly and the belly for meats. Your minds are corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

ZABAD. We shall meet at Jerusalem [*to MATTHIAS*] Quick, get them away, the moment Paul is down he starts to climb again.

[ZABAD and MATTHIAS urge PETER and BARNABAS to door, left.]

PAUL. Tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

ZABAD. Get them away.

MATTHIAS. Peace! The wedge is strong enough to bear the orator's last appeal.

[They stand with their backs to PAUL in a huddled group by the door.]

PAUL. Are we not labourers together with God? Being reviled we bless, being persecuted we suffer it, being defamed we intreat. We are made as the filth of the world—*[Strong resentment]* I say not these things to shame you, for much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary, and we who are uncomely have more abundant comeliness. Yet we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free. Are we not members one of another?

[As they slink out one by one, PAUL holds out his arms to them.]

PAUL. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you, and to change my voice, *[PAUL is now alone]* and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you.

[PAUL turns away beaten. After a while he holds up his arms and prays.]

PAUL. Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned. Forgive thy servants Peter and Barnabas, who have sinned. Let them not be tempted to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor

we were able to bear. For thou art the God of goodness, thou dost forgive. Blessed art thou O Lord who art the same, to-day, to-morrow and for ever.

[PAUL now becomes a man of action. He faces the Sigma and claps his hands. Enter back, TERTIUS, a cheerful little scribe, devoted to PAUL.]

TERTIUS. Yes, guv'nor ?

PAUL. Tertius, open the doors !

[TERTIUS opens the doors or draws the curtain, back.]

[A mixed party of six Greek Gentiles and two Jews enter, and move forward, four passing on each side of the Sigma, to form a little group centre, facing the front. PAUL, who has not moved, greets them each and severally.]

PAUL. Crotan, my beloved ! Daphne, guardian of "Antioch upon Daphne" ! Jeremy and Ishbak my kinsmen and protectors ! Helios my sunny one ! Nicias and Thisbe my toilers in fishy yet fruitful waters, and Salvia their mother and mine ! [Kisses her.]

[PAUL passes between them and climbing a convenient step or two, turns and addresses them, speaking simply and quietly as if for the first time with gestures appropriate to simple people, the following discourse (Ephesians VI, 10—17.)]

PAUL. My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual

wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

[At the conclusion of the address the party immediately breaks up and goes out left and right singing a psalm (e.g., Psalm 8, 100, 112, or 121.)]

[PAUL remains forward and moves left.]

[Enter, right, KRITIAS AND LEMNIA, who, it is supposed, have worked under PAUL since their first meeting with him at Damascus; they have now just returned from a review of the Churches of South Galatia.]

PAUL. Kritias my friend, and Lemnia. I had not hoped to see your faces so soon.

KRITIAS. It is three months since you sent us word at Seleucia to follow your steps in Galatia and review the work which you and Barnabas had done there.

PAUL. I would I had had opportunity to see your face, dear Kritias, your faces I should say, for it seems that Lemnia has shared this journey with you.

KRITIAS. We are married, Master.

LEMNIA *[who has a keen sense of humour]* All things have been done decently and in order.

PAUL *[drily]* It is better to marry than to burn.

LEMNIA. Kritias and I, Master, have chosen the lesser evil.

PAUL. I had blessed you had I but known. Lemnia, you are indeed fit to glorify Kritias your husband.

KRITIAS. I was an unbeliever till I met Lemnia.

LEMNIA. To convert him was a labour. I often think I should have married him first.

PAUL. What—married him as an unbeliever?

LEMNIA. Yes, Master, for *I* was a believer, and have you not yourself said, ‘The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife?’

PAUL [*pleased*]. Of a truth the Serpent imparted his subtlety unto Eve! Kritias, I bid you give heed to this woman that your speech, like hers, may not be only with grace but seasoned with salt.

LEMNIA. I am reminded of my duties.

PAUL. How so?

LEMNIA. If any would not work neither should he eat.

[*Exit, right.*]

[*A pause. PAUL and KRITIAS sit.*]

KRITIAS. Are you well, Master?

PAUL. I labour most abundantly.

KRITIAS. You would labour were you dead! We heard you suffered on your journey.

PAUL. I left Perga without preaching because of my infirmity of the flesh. Certain Jews pursued us to Lystra and persuaded the people to stone me. I was dragged out of the city and left for dead. Howbeit I recovered . . .

KRITIAS. Were you sick for many weeks?

PAUL. I came to Derbe on the next day.

KRITIAS. You must have suffered. Were you carried in a wagon or on a litter ?

PAUL. I went on foot, the distance is only twenty miles. Tell me, Kritias, are the Galatians steadfast ?

KRITIAS. There are already some that trouble them and would pervert the gospel.

PAUL. Zealots for the law ?

KRITIAS. Aye, Master. In Galacia the Jews are many and strong. Those that believe would make all God-fearers Jews.

PAUL. I marvel they are so soon removed.

KRITIAS. If we go not far and wide unto the Gentiles the Faith is doomed, for the Christian Jews would make of Christ a tribal God.

PAUL. O foolish Galatians, have I bestowed upon them labour in vain ?

KRITIAS. Master, I am persuaded that the faith of those Jews who accept Jesus as their Messiah——

PAUL. Judaizers !

KRITIAS. Must perish and be as if it never had been.

PAUL. And the Jews themselves ?

KRITIAS. They and their religion shall never die. Rome and Greece may pass away, but the Jews will be always with us.

PAUL. I will write with mine own hand, an epistle to the Galatians.

[Re-enter, left and right, the party singing a psalm, e.g., the 8th, 100th, 112th, or 121st. Two carry wicker baskets of bread ; two, bowls of fish, and olives ; one, plates ; another a krater for mixing wine ; another a jar of water. They put the meal on the

ground inside the semi-circle formed by the Sigma, walk, in two groups, round behind the Sigma, and leave room in the centre for PAUL, LEMNIA and KRITIAS, who take their places here.]

[All standing in the 'orans' attitude with arms outstretched, PAUL says the following grace.]

PAUL. With great love hast thou loved us, O Lord our God; with great and overflowing pity hast thou pitied us. O our Father, our King, for our fathers' sake, who trusted in thee, and whom thou didst teach the statutes of life, be gracious unto us too, and teach us. Enlighten our eyes in thy grace, and let our hearts cleave unto thy commandments, and unite our hearts to love and fear thy name, that we may never be put to confusion.

[Black out. When the lights are again turned up, all are reclining at the Sigma. The meal is practically at an end. A dish of olives is being circulated. Talk and laughter. TERTIUS stands left.]

CROTAN. A little more water for this wine, Tertius.

[TERTIUS pours water into a bowl, which circulates.]

HELIOS. . . . And beyond the Euphrates.

PAUL. Oho, my bright Helios! In what far corners of the world do your beams shine now?

HELIOS. I was telling Nicias how the Work progresses, so I've heard, beyond the Euphrates in Edessa and Nisibis.

NICIAS. And in Amida.

PAUL. I am glad to hear of it. And now if we have

finished, let us proclaim the Lord's death till he comes.

[TERTIUS fills a glass chalice with wine and gives it to PAUL, then returns to his place at the Sigma. All remain reclining. PAUL, also reclining, holds up the chalice.]

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King Eternal, who createst the fruit of the vine. We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David thy servant which thou hast made known to us through thy servant Jesus. To thee be glory for ever.

[He gives the cup to his right-hand neighbour. His left-hand neighbour puts a plate of bread before him.]

PAUL [*over the bread*] Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King Eternal, who bringest forth bread from the earth. [*Breaks bread*] As this broken bread was scattered upon the hills, and was brought together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom; for thine is the glory and the power and the might, through Jesus Christ for ever.

[PAUL puts the broken bread on the plate (the bread very much resembled our modern breakfast roll) and returns the plate to his left-hand neighbour. Then—the wine and bread being held up by the recipients—PAUL says]

We give thanks to thee, O holy Father, for thy loving-kindness unto us. May we be strengthened with power through thy Spirit in the inward man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith; to the end that we,

being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

*[As the cup and bread are being passed round,
the scene ends.]*

ACT III

ACT III

SCENE I

[*A room in PAUL'S 'own hired house' at Rome, A.D. 62.*]

[*Facing audience at a tripod table forward right sits TERTIUS writing on a roll of papyrus. By the table is the cylinder-shaped box in which the Epistles are carried.*]

[*PAUL, now aged, sits in a high chair half facing TERTIUS. There are doors back right and forward left, a movable wooden bed against the left wall, elsewhere another tripod table and a stool or two. In the back wall is an open window. Sunset.*]

[*PAUL is dictating the last words of his epistle to the Philippians.*]

PAUL. Salute every saint at Philippi—no. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

TERTIUS. There's precious little room for salutations, guv'nor.

PAUL. Tertius, my son, you should write smaller.

TERTIUS. I always write as small as I can. When you wrote your epistle to the Romans at Corinth I got in a salutation on my own. But I had Egyptian papyrus then, not this short Roman stuff, *and* good ink. This ink is all soot and no gum, and these reeds are as thick as the staff a centurion uses to flog his men with.

PAUL. Never mind, Tertius. You write better epistles than the scribes of the churches who write to me.

TERTIUS. O they aren't scribes, guv'nor; public letter writers, that's all they are. Their Greek would make even a Roman laugh. Your Greek's quite good, guv'nor.

PAUL. Thank you, Tertius.

TERTIUS. Now Mark's Greek—well, perhaps it is not for me to say. There's just room for another general salutation, guv'nor.

PAUL [*dictating*] All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household.

TERTIUS [*who is rather a snob*] Wonderful the way the slaves and freedmen of the Imperial Household have come in lately.

PAUL. Is there any more room?

TERTIUS. Only for a general grace, guv'nor.

PAUL. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

TERTIUS [*writing*] Never any room for little Tertius to add a salutation. Who is to carry this epistle, guv'nor?

PAUL. Epaproditus.

TERTIUS. Epaproditus!

PAUL. Why not?

TERTIUS. Well, guv'nor, as he's going to take the letter himself, why couldn't you have made him *say* all the kind things you have made me *write* about him?

PAUL. Then perchance there might have been room for 'I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.'

TERTIUS. Well, guv'nor, when I wrote to the Romans—at Corinth——

PAUL. I know, Tertius, I know. But Epaproditus was nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply the Philippians; lack of service toward me.

TERTIUS. Yes, I took that down.

PAUL. But did you take it in, Tertius?

TERTIUS. You're too much of a gentleman for me to understand straight away, guv'nor. There's a passage here—where is it?—'But I trust in the Lord to send Timotheus (I don't like these Latinizations, guv'nor, but I suppose now we are in Rome we must do as the Romans do) shortly unto you—that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.' Now I suppose that means 'You Philippians don't get Timothy till you have written again, so there.' But it may mean 'I'll send Timothy and he will report to me about you.'

PAUL. Perhaps it means both, Tertius.

TERTIUS. If the cap fits wear it, maybe. You're such a deep one, guv'nor, you always were. You're very kind to these Philippians, guv'nor.

PAUL. They sent once and again unto my necessity.

TERTIUS. I shouldn't like to have been with you and Silas at Philippi, judging by all accounts.

PAUL. What accounts have you heard, Tertius?

TERTIUS. Well, I heard how you and Silas were run in for showing up that ventriloquist gal who thought she was an oracle, and how the magistrates ordered the lictors to beat you without a formal trial. And how during the night the whole prison where you were was

E

alive with angels and shaken to the ground by an earthquake shock.

PAUL. Not quite shaken to the ground, Tertius.

TERTIUS. Well, that's what *I* heard. And how next morning the prætors sent their lictors to the prison to order your release on condition you left the city and you said, 'No fear. They have beaten us uncondemned, being Romans, nay verily let 'em come and fetch us.'

PAUL. That is true enough. Wouldn't you have done likewise, Tertius ?

TERTIUS. Done likewise ! Once they'd got the shackles off me, you wouldn't have seen me for dust. No, guv'nor, to ask for it as you did after a beating that has killed men afore now, next morning too, when all your wounds must've felt like branding irons, now I do call that the very 'eight of style. Who is going to Philippi along with Epaproditus, guv'nor ?

PAUL. Tychicus and Onesimus, Kritias and Lemnia. Epaproditus will be left at Philippi, and the others will proceed to Ephesus, Laodiceia and Colossæ with epistles for the churches at those places.

TERTIUS. I see. 'Multum in parvo,' as we Romans say, that is when we *are* Romans. [*A knock*] What's that ? [*He goes out and returns*] It's Onesimus.

PAUL. Who ?

TERTIUS. Onesimus, the runaway slave, guv'nor.

PAUL. I will see Onesimus.

TERTIUS. D'you mind if I stay here, must get on with those relief lists ?

PAUL. By all means stay.

TERTIUS. Thank you, guv'nor.

[He goes to the door, right back, opens it, whistles down the passage, leaves the door open and goes back to his table, where he sits, after quietly turning his chair, that he may face PAUL and surreptitiously watch the following scene.]

[Enter ONESIMUS, a boy of seventeen scantily dressed for his journey, with marching sandals on his bare feet. He sees PAUL, runs to him, and crouching at his feet, bursts into tears. PAUL comforts him.]

PAUL. Why weep you, son, whom I have begotten in my bonds? You need have no fear of your master Philemon. He will not harm you.

ONESIMUS. Master, I weep not in fear of crucifixion or torture.

PAUL. Why then?

ONESIMUS. I am a slave.

PAUL. There are more slaves than freedmen in the world to-day, Onesimus.

ONESIMUS. But here, to you, I have been a son. Master, may I not stay?

PAUL. I would fain have kept you, my far from unprofitable Onesimus, that you might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel, but without the consent of Philemon I can do nothing. You see, you are his benefit to me; but a benefit should not be forced but given willingly. You ran away from your master at Colossæ, though he did not treat you ill, and you came all the way to Rome. Why did you come to Rome, Onesimus?

ONESIMUS. Master, all roads lead to Rome.

PAUL. You starved, did you not [*ONESIMUS nods*], and bethinking you of Philemon's fellow Christians and friends of whom I am proud to be one, you sought me out and found me. You must tell Philemon the truth, Onesimus.

ONESIMUS. How shall my master believe all this from me, a slave ?

PAUL [*rising*] No longer a slave [*lifts ONESIMUS to his feet*] but something more than a slave, a brother, beloved especially to me and so how much more to Philemon.

ONESIMUS. How much less ! Were I you, master, Philemon would receive me as a brother.

PAUL. What if I asked him to receive you as myself ?

ONESIMUS. How can he receive me as he would receive you, master, since you have not wronged him ?

PAUL. If you have wronged him or owe him ought, the sum shall be put down to my account. I will repay it, for your master owes me his very self. Onesimus, I have written to Philemon about you.

ONESIMUS. You have *written* to Philemon ?

PAUL. With mine own hand. The epistle is in the box with the others.

ONESIMUS. You have written an epistle to Philemon all about me ?

PAUL. I have told him all I have told you and more. I have confidence in his obedience, knowing he will do even more than I ask.

ONESIMUS [*unable to get over it*] Paul the greatest of all the apostles writes with his own hand about *me*, a slave, and the letter is in there [*points*] along with the

epistle to the Philippians, the epistle to the Ephesians, and the epistle to the Colossians.

PAUL. In which last you are called a 'faithful and beloved brother.' I have asked Philemon to receive you not now as a slave but above a slave, a brother beloved, especially to me. Now return to the others and come you all to bid me farewell. And I pray to see you a freedman, when I come to Colossæ. [*Kisses him.*]

ONESIMUS. May that be soon, master.

[*He goes out. By this time TERTIUS has extracted the epistle to Philemon, a short strip about a foot long, and is reading it with amazement and dismay. PAUL sits.*]

PAUL. You look surprised, Tertius.

TERTIUS. Surprised, guv'nor, I'm staggered. You must have written this whilst I was out.

PAUL. Maybe.

TERTIUS. What will you do next, I wonder. Well, it's no business of mine. I pray none but Philemon reads it, though.

PAUL. 'Tis addressed only to Philemon and the church in his house.

TERTIUS. And I hope it stops there, guv'nor. For a more dangerous epistle you never have written. 'Not now as a slave but above a slave, a brother beloved.' Seems to me the word 'emancipation' is atrembling on your lips.

PAUL. I steer a straight course on an even keel, Tertius.

TERTIUS. Maybe, guv'nor, but you voyage in dangerous waters.

PAUL. Slaves must obey their masters and masters give unto their servants what is just and equal. I can say no more than that, for there is no more to say.

TERTIUS [*putting the epistle back in the box*] To call a slave a brother beloved seems to me to be saying a great deal more than that.

PAUL [*with feeling*] I must sometimes speak my heart. For I am forced to fill my epistles with admonitions and reproofs. How can I speak of the mystery that is in Christ to men who have not put away childish things, but live in superstitions, vain repetitions, fables and endless genealogies?

[*A pause.*]

TERTIUS. I didn't mean no offence, guv'nor.

PAUL. I know, Tertius. I speak as a fool.

TERTIUS [*kindly*] You ain't no fool, guv'nor.

PAUL. I was born out of due time.

TERTIUS. You live in two worlds at once, guv'nor, this world and the world to be when this one has come to an end. Then there's the spiritual world. That's three worlds. No wonder you puzzle us sometimes.

[*He works as LEMNIA enters. She is prepared for a journey and wears a cloak.*]

LEMNIA. Paul, Epaproditus may be unable to come here for the epistles. Pray send Tertius with them to his house.

PAUL. Go, Tertius, and when you return bring Septimus with you.

TERTIUS. Very good, guv'nor. [*Exit with box slung over his shoulder.*]

LEMNIA. I can tell you no more till Kritias comes.

PAUL. You look troubled, Lemnia. Sit down and tell me why.

LEMNIA. Were I not a woman I should not be troubled, but—I have to speak to you while I can. Paul, the heathen hate us for our cheerfulness and the corporate and happy life we lead.

PAUL. How should they not hate us, being themselves hateful and hating one another ?

LEMNIA. All things are lawful to you, but all things are not expedient.

PAUL. What is not expedient ?

[LEMNIA sits.]

LEMNIA. Paul, I am a woman, I speak for women. There is, you say, neither male nor female in God's sight. No wonder the Faith appeals to the women and the slave. No wonder they flock to us in their thousands and are baptized. With slaves it matters little, for you preach obedience and a slave may become freed and rise in the world, but this claim for women redounds in hatred and obloquy on those of us who preach it.

PAUL [*half to himself*] Neither male nor female.

LEMNIA. Tell that to the baptized, not to the unbaptized.

PAUL. What—for fear lest too many may join us ?

LEMNIA. Paul, in a world where women are reckoned as slaves and like slaves may be crucified, where divorce is impossible for the woman yet may be had for the man's asking, can you not see that our Faith in appealing so strongly to women obliges us to face the growing hostility of men ?

PAUL [*sadly*] You would falter by the wayside, Lemnia.

LEMNIA. You ask too much, you go too far.

PAUL. 'Tis all or nothing, everybody or nobody with me.

LEMNIA. You know so little of women. I am convinced——

PAUL. What ? Came the word of God out from you or came it unto you alone ? By what revelation was it made known unto you to renounce the comprehension that is in Christ ?

LEMNIA. I had not thought to persuade you.

PAUL. Lemnia, in nothing be terrified by your adversaries among whom you shine as a light in the world . . . and ye shall be my sons *and daughters*, saith the Lord Almighty.

[*Enter KRITIAS.*]

Kritias, you come alone ?

KRITIAS. I have sent on the others.

PAUL. Without my blessing.

KRITIAS. I had to avoid the Emperor's cavalcade. Nero is going to one of his four villas at Tusculum. He is taking the Via Latina.

PAUL. His road and yours.

KRITIAS. Yes. Part of the imperial household is already on the march. Our two wagons could never pass their hundreds. So Epaproditus and Tychicus have gone on ahead. Lemnia and I can overtake them on our mules.

LEMNIA. Is the Empress Poppæa going ?

KRITIAS. So I presume since her five hundred asses are in the first mile of transport.

LEMNIA. O those donkeys! Why shouldn't *I* bathe in asses' milk every day?

PAUL. We poor Christians must be content with water.

LEMNIA. All the same, I consider Epaproditus and Tychicus very over-cautious.

[KRITIAS *sits on table.*]

KRITIAS. My dear child, you don't seem to realise that we are going to Brundisium and that we and Nero, or rather Cæsar and ourselves, are both leaving Rome by the same road.

LEMNIA. O yes I do.

KRITIAS. Cæsar's cohorts would no more let our wagons pass by day or night than Nero would become a Christian. If we hadn't preceded the Emperor's soldiers, wagons, coaches, runners, outriders, asses and all, what chance have we of getting to Brundisium in time to catch the last of the grain ships to sail before the feast of the Ship of Isis? There's no more sailing from Italy for six winter months after that, remember, and it's eight days' journey to Brundisium.

LEMNIA. We could have reached Puteoli in three days and gone round by sea.

PAUL. And risked your lives and my epistles. No, Lemnia: thrice have I suffered shipwreck myself and always at this season. You will cross Macedonia, leave Epaproditus at Philippi and take ship yourselves from Neapolis to Ephesus.

KRITIAS. Or go by land and swim the Hellespont. It's not difficult to find a ship out of Italy, but here the superstition of Isis reigns supreme. Sailors are a superstitious lot,—I don't trust 'em.

PAUL. Neither do I.

[*They laugh.*]

LEMNIA. I would like to have been with you, Paul, during that shipwreck, when the sailors were seeking to flee out of the ship, and had lowered the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would lay out anchors from the foreship; and you saw through the ruse and told the centurion.

PAUL. Except we had cut away the ropes of the boat and let her fall off, the sailors would have escaped, then where should we have been?

KRITIAS. In the sea. No more epistles and no more Paul. Of a truth the fellow who told me that no man is indispensable was a liar!

PAUL. I am no longer necessary to you.

LEMNIA [*alarmed*] Don't talk like that, Paul. [*She rises*] You haven't—heard anything, have you?

PAUL. No, no, my child, I have heard nothing. Concern not yourself, I trust I shall be given to you.

LEMNIA. We turn our eyes away from this endless trial only because we dare not face it. But if we speak lightly, we speak with no lightness of heart.

PAUL. We cannot destroy the last enemy except we die.

LEMNIA. Death troubles us not, but leaving you here, like this, is desertion.

PAUL. You desert me only if you sail not from Brundisium.

KRITIAS. I'll see to that, Paul.

PAUL. My body is in the hands of Cæsar. Nothing

that you can do can matter a jot as to whether he separates my spirit or lets it abide in the flesh.

LEMNIA. I sometimes think you want to die.

PAUL [*weighing the pros and cons*] For myself I am in a strait betwixt two having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better ; I say this not to shame you who are in my heart to live. Who shall separate us ?

LEMNIA. You are like the eagle, for you can look at the sun without flinching.

PAUL. *Aquilæ senecta*, the old age of an eagle.

LEMNIA. Yet the eagle suffers little birds to sing.

[*Distant cheering is heard.*]

KRITIAS. Time to go, Lemnia.

[*He rises. LEMNIA turns to PAUL.*]

LEMNIA [*controlling her tears with difficulty*] Good-bye, chief. You will come to us ?

PAUL. God willing I shall not fail to come with Timothy.

[*LEMNIA tries to speak, fails, turns and runs out of the room.*]

PAUL [*embracing KRITIAS*] The Lord be with you, Kritias.

KRITIAS [*moves to the door*] You have not mentioned me in any of your epistles ?

PAUL. No, Kritias, I have respected that whim of yours. But will you not tell me why you must be nameless ?

KRITIAS. The name of Kritias will die with him. But as one of the unnamed disciples of Paul I may live for ever.

[*He goes. A pause. Sound of trotting horses. Exit PAUL left.*]

[*After a while TERTIUS and SEPTIMUS enter by the other door. SEPTIMUS carries chains. He is the soldier of Acts 28, 16. One of his duties is to chain PAUL by a long, light chain every night, fastening one end of the chain to his padlocked wrists, the other end to a ring in the wall. He drops the chain centre. The two men place PAUL's bed in the middle of the room, the head facing left. They fetch pillows and a blanket and generally get the room ready for the night. The following dialogue accompanies the action from their entry.*]

SEPTIMUS. I had a word with a fellow—nice fellow he was—who told me the Emperor won't leave the palace for at least another half hour; so we shan't miss him if we're quick.

TERTIUS. I saw you stop and speak to someone. Who was he?

SEPTIMUS. One of the household.

TERTIUS. O, but the fellow I saw you stop and speak to was walking *away* from the procession.

SEPTIMUS. Yes, you see he was one of the Imperial plumbers.

TERTIUS. Left his tools be'ind, I suppose.

SEPTIMUS. Yes, *and* half a mosaic pavement. They are all the same. I say we mustn't miss Poppæa. The royal horses are harnessed with gold and the travelling carriages covered with gold figures.

TERTIUS. I saw the palanquins for the noble ladies. O my!

SEPTIMUS. It costs something to impress the mob, I can tell you. Especially when you've only just killed your queen.

TERTIUS. I never had any use for Octavia myself.

SEPTIMUS. *And* your mother. Only last year too.

TERTIUS. I never saw Agrippina, so I can't say what she was like. Not that Nero cares a sestertius for anybody but himself. 'Se ipse amans sine rivali,' or, as we say in Greek, 'A lover of himself without any rival.'

[*Re-enter PAUL dressed in a black sleeping garment.*]

PAUL. Tertius, where is Luke?

TERTIUS. Gone to a house in the Campus Martius, gov'nor. He ought to be home soon.

[*PAUL gets into bed. SEPTIMUS then padlocks his wrists and fastens the chain to the left wall. The following dialogue accompanies this action.*]

TERTIUS. Master Luke was called away by a rich freedman whose daughter was sick. Funny how ill these rich freedmen get.

PAUL. We labour too abundantly to be sick.

TERTIUS. I don't want to be sick, but I should like to be able to afford it. Not that Luke is an expensive physician; he isn't. Yet they say he's the only doctor in Rome whose stuff for bathing sore eyes isn't mere eye-wash.

PAUL. Rome has few physicians. [*He lies down*] Luke the beloved physician. His labours have brought more grist to the mill in two years than all my night-long vigils, stitching tents. O Tertius, if Timothy should

return to-night, see that he has the broiled pigeons that Mark brought me this evening. [*He nods.*]

[*TERTIUS and SEPTIMUS exchange glances.*

TERTIUS coughs. PAUL opens his eyes.]

PAUL. What is it, Tertius ?

TERTIUS. Do you wish me to wait in for Master Timothy, guv'nor ? You see, guv'nor, Septimus and I would like to assist the Emperor to leave for Tusculum.

PAUL. Well, assist him, Tertius.

SEPTIMUS. And me, sir ?

PAUL. Septimus, are you my prisoner or am I yours ?

SEPTIMUS. You're mine, sir.

PAUL. May not a soldier chain his prisoner and go where he will ?

SEPTIMUS. I see your point, sir. [*Goes to the door*]
What I mean is, have you any objection to my going ?

PAUL. None whatsoever, my beloved Septimus.

SEPTIMUS. Thank you, sir.

[*When they have gone PAUL stretches out his arms and chained wrists above his head, turns on his left side and sleeps. After a while LUKE enters wearing a cloak. He crosses behind PAUL and goes into the adjoining room, left. A distant noise of cheering and shouts of 'Ave Cæsar' rises and gradually dies away. The light changes as the sun sets and the moon rises. A knock, back right. LUKE re-enters, carrying a lantern, crosses behind PAUL, and goes out. A moment later LUKE, followed by TIMOTHY, enter, both carrying lanterns. TIMOTHY is tall, young and good-looking, LUKE an older man, wise, gentle and reflective.*]

LUKE. He was asleep when I returned. Come into the kitchen and have your supper.

TIMOTHY. I think we ought to wake him.

LUKE. O, and why ?

TIMOTHY. I have hope of news.

LUKE. News ! [*Runs to PAUL*] Paul ! Paul ! [*Wakes him*] Timothy has returned. He brings news.

PAUL [*sitting up*] Timothy, my son.

TIMOTHY. Hope of news, I said. [*Sits on end of PAUL's bed*] I crossed the Tiber over the Pons Aemilius and took the Via Tusculum to the Forum. Outside one of the four law courts of the Basilica Julia I ran into a crowd.

[*LUKE sits in PAUL's chair.*]

LUKE. The Basilica Julia. Is that the building on the Palatine Hill, near the barracks of the Palace Guard ?

TIMOTHY. Yes. There are law courts there. In the crowd were various soldiers off duty. I heard Paul's name bandied about. I tried to get in, but failed.

PAUL. Paulus is a common name.

TIMOTHY. It was your name I heard, chief. I'll tell you how I know. You remember Sergius Rufus ?

PAUL. What, the little soldier with the red hair who was in charge of me before Septimus ?

TIMOTHY. That's the man. He is now servant to one of the three Prætorian Prefects who are trying your case.

LUKE [*to TIMOTHY*] You met this fellow ?

TIMOTHY [*irritably*] Yes. I told you I met him.

LUKE. You didn't, my dear boy, but go on.

TIMOTHY. Sergius Rufus told me, and he ought to

know, that owing to the Emperor's sudden departure from Rome, they are hurrying through Paul's trial.

LUKE. Why in Paul's absence ?

TIMOTHY. To avoid delay and publicity. Early to-morrow Nero's deputy takes over. There's not a moment to lose. You see the Prefects are anxious to acquit Paul, for in so doing they will slight the Jews, his accusers, but they've no chance of doing that if Nero's deputy is in control.

LUKE. Because of Poppæa ?

TIMOTHY. Undoubtedly. If Nero's new empress were not a Jewess, she would matter as little to us as her murdered predecessor ; but she is a Jewess. Her influence over Nero is disastrous. When he or his deputy is acting as Princeps, it's a waste of time to defend an enemy of the Jews, like Paul.

PAUL. It was not so when I appealed unto Cæsar.

TIMOTHY. Octavia was empress then.

PAUL [*drily*] O that women were silent not only in church.

TIMOTHY. To-night old scores against the Jews will be paid off, to-morrow it will be too late. The Pretorian Prefects will sit all night convicting Jews and acquitting their enemies, you amongst them.

LUKE. You have a scant sense of Roman law and Roman justice, my dear Timothy.

PAUL. And hope would seem to be stronger in you than either faith or charity.

TIMOTHY. But a centurion and a squad of men were on duty waiting for an order to release you.

PAUL. *Release*, are you so sure ?

TIMOTHY. Why—yes, quite sure. They may be here at any moment. It's only a matter of minutes now, of minutes I say.

[He gets up and moves about restless and nervous.

PAUL sleeps.]

LUKE. I fear the issue, for ours is not a lawful faith, whereas the Jewish faith is lawful. And the Jews will be at pains to separate our religion from theirs. Paul may be only a battle-ground of wits to them.

TIMOTHY. I am sure all will be well. Quite, quite sure.

LUKE. If the centurion comes, he is unlikely to come to release Paul.

TIMOTHY. Why not?

LUKE. Not a centurion but a common soldier——

TIMOTHY. No, I say!

LUKE. Yes, Timothy—a common soldier will release Paul and order Septimus to return to his cohort. If a centurion comes——

TIMOTHY. But I tell you I saw—I saw.

LUKE. A centurion.

TIMOTHY. O God help us!

LUKE. Courage, Timothy. We have waited for two years, we can wait a little longer.

TIMOTHY. Why shouldn't we cling to hope?

LUKE. We must face the worst now, that we be not taken unprepared.

TIMOTHY. If he goes nothing will matter. Paul is the hub on which the wheel of the Church turns. We look to him for everything.

LUKE. Wild words, lacking courage in despair!

TIMOTHY. I feel like a child left to find its way home in the dark.

LUKE. It is easy to be brave in brave company, and none too difficult to put on another's nobility until he is taken from you. But now we must see to it that Paul shall not have lived and suffered in vain.

TIMOTHY. Look at him sleeping like a child.

LUKE. Sleep comes easily to one who has no love to spare for himself.

TIMOTHY. You cover me with shame.

LUKE. Shame is a rich soil for the growth of wisdom, Timothy.

TIMOTHY. No love to spare for himself, no time to spend on himself, all things and all men of use to him, in whatsoever state he is, content.

LUKE. Paul has outwitted the cunning of Satan; for he has gathered strength from the weaknesses of the flesh, and made the discomforts of the world his comfort.

[A knock. TIMOTHY runs and looks out of the window.]

LUKE. Well?

TIMOTHY. The centurion.

[LUKE goes to TIMOTHY and puts his hand on his shoulder.]

LUKE. Courage, Timothy. Be a man.

[He goes out. TIMOTHY, after another look out of the window, goes to the bed and stands on the upstage side of it. Footsteps. Re-enter LUKE followed by a CENTURION and TWO SOLDIERS carrying lighted torches.]

CENTURION *[forward]* Is this the fellow?

TIMOTHY. It is, Centurion.

CENTURION. *Quieta non movere.* Torch boy! [*Reads from a roll.*] Caius Claudius Nero, Cæsar Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, father of his country, authorizes the release from confinement of Gaius Lucius Paulus, a Roman citizen of Tarsus, who is permitted henceforward to pass without let or hindrance within the boundaries of the world.

Signed in the ninth year of Cæsar's tribunicial authority by Aulus Pomponius, Lucius Milo, Gaius Servius Sulpicius, præfecti prætorio.

[*The CENTURION hands the document to LUKE, goes to PAUL, unlocks the padlock at his wrists, and lets the chains fall to the ground.*]

CENTURION. Instruct the soldier in charge of this man to report to his cohort forthwith. Farewell.

[*Exeunt.*]

TIMOTHY. Paul!

LUKE. Why wake him, Timothy?

TIMOTHY. If only that he may know he sleeps unshackled. Paul! Paul!

[*PAUL wakes and sits up.*]

You're acquitted. A centurion has removed your chains. You're free.

PAUL [*looking at his hands*] Free. Free to be with you. I rejoice. [*Lies down*] Nevertheless, I pray you wake me not again. O Timothy, there are broiled pigeons for your supper, pigeons for your supper. [*Stretching out his arms in his habitual sleeping position as if still chained, he sleeps.*]

TIMOTHY. Paul, Paul, you are bound no longer!

LUKE. Vex him not.

TIMOTHY. But he seems not to understand.

LUKE. Timothy, must I repeat that Paul has gathered strength from the weaknesses of the flesh ?

TIMOTHY. And made the discomforts of the world his comfort.

LUKE. Even in his sleep.

TIMOTHY. Even in his sleep.

[LUKE picks up his lantern and goes out, left.

TIMOTHY, after a last look at PAUL, follows. The room is left in darkness.]

SCENE 2

[A cell in the Carcer at Rome. A.D. 65. Light from a lantern hanging from a bracket. Two stools, a bed, a small table, centre.]

[PAUL, now under 'custodia militaris' is seated. One end of a long chain is fastened to his left wrist, the other end to the right wrist of a Roman soldier, who lies asleep on the bed.]

[The bolts of the door, back, are withdrawn, and

LUKE, much excited, is admitted. PAUL rises.]

LUKE. I bring news, great news. [Sits.] Mark has returned from Ephesus with his gospel completed.

PAUL. I rejoice. Yet not for Mark the full story that you will write, for you have had perfect understanding of all things from the beginning.

LUKE. I must see Mark's account.

PAUL. Mark, the disciple of Peter, though Greek in spirit, is a Jew. One gospel, and that the gospel of a Jew, is not enough.

LUKE. I have not been idle. Those two long years when you lay a prisoner at Cæsarea were very fruitful. And I have known many who knew the Lord. James his brother, and Mary his mother, and Mary the mother of Mark, and Mnason and Philip, one of the seven. Many have taken in hand to set forth the things which are believed among us. I have many sources.

PAUL. You are the man, beloved physician. Preach the good news to all nations. Go unto the Gentiles, they will hear it. Continue my teaching, not as I wrote when I spoke as a child to the Thessalonians, but rather as when, three years ago, I became a man and wrote to the Ephesians. I thought once that the Lord would come again soon, would descend from Heaven with a shout, but I need not remind you. Now I know that ages yet unborn must be, before the world is leavened and we all come to the unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Often have I said that, but only now have I come fully to understand it.

LUKE. Let not your heart be troubled. For it is written in the Gospel of an unknown disciple of Antioch how when Jesus was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered, 'The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation : neither shall they say, Lo, here ! Lo, there ! for behold the kingdom of God is within you.'

PAUL. I rejoice to hear of it.

LUKE. And when I have written my treatise of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, I must set down what is known of Paul.

PAUL. Speak of the work before I came, beloved Luke, and consider well where you write and for whom.

LUKE. I shall write for the Gentiles here at Rome.

PAUL. Then beware lest you offend the majesty of Rome, or your book will be sought out and burnt. Make no mention of my departure now at hand—nay, speak not at all of this my second imprisonment. For Cæsar is a jealous god.

[*The SOLDIER stirs and opens his eyes.*]

LUKE. Hush !

[*The SOLDIER sleeps.*]

PAUL. Luke, be truthful when you speak of me. Tell in full measure how I persecuted the church of God, but I pray you weaken not my work for Christ by mention of my quarrels with Peter and Barnabas, who are now as my brothers.

LUKE [*puzzled*] Peter and Barnabas.

PAUL. We quarrelled once at Antioch. Set down nothing thereof. Mine was the victory (for Christ divided amongst us had been Christ defeated), but the shame was ours.

LUKE. I remember, but you wrote to the Galatians about that.

PAUL. So I did, so I did. I had quite forgotten.

LUKE. What if the letter is preserved and still read aloud by the faithful of Galatia ?

PAUL. Still read aloud, think you ?

LUKE. They are simple people. Moreover, you have written but once or twice to each of your churches.

PAUL. I had not done that, had I been free to visit them.

LUKE. Then let us thank God for prison walls and chains that bound you, and for enemies who, in seeking to oppress us, have lightened our burden.

PAUL. You speak in riddles.

LUKE. *Litera scripta manet*—the written letter remains. Your enemies forced you to write, and now, because of that, your work shall continue.

PAUL. You shall carry it on.

LUKE. Your work shall live in your letters.

PAUL. I had written them with great deliberation had I thought they would endure.

LUKE. They shall endure.

PAUL. My letters were written to supply an urgent need. They are full of salutations and reprimands and little jokes; for as I wrote I thought of the person or people to whom I was writing. My letters cannot endure.

LUKE. Must I repeat?

PAUL. I wrote to Timothy—it was only last month—I asked him to bring the cloak I left at Troas at the house of Carpus. Is that of interest to the world?

LUKE. It is of interest to me.

PAUL. You are my friend, Luke. You have loved me.

LUKE. No man who knows and loves not Paul, can know and love his Master.

PAUL. When Mark's gospel, the real gospel of the very Christ is abroad, and yours too, and maybe others, how shall my script survive?

LUKE. It shall survive.

PAUL. You please an aged man, beloved physician, but you talk foolishness.

LUKE. I would say more.

PAUL. You have said too much already.

LUKE. May your letters always be read to the churches to whom they were addressed.

PAUL. *Always* read, as though they were the writings—not here and there, but altogether—of a man inspired?

LUKE. They shall be collected and bound together and read by *all* the churches.

PAUL. Madness. The scriptures are not more honoured.

LUKE. Some may prefer a letter from Paul to the books of Moses or the proverbs of Solomon, in short to the Book itself.

PAUL. Peace, Luke! Even at this hour I cannot listen to blasphemy.

LUKE. I ask your pardon.

PAUL. I charge you take over from me the care of all the churches. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

[*The sound of a bolt being withdrawn. Enter a CENTURION and a SOLDIER carrying a chain one end of which is fastened to his left wrist.*]

CENTURION [*in shadow, back*] Gaius Lucius Paulus, your hour has come. Cæsar Aug——

PAUL. Spare me the majesty of Cæsar, I beg you.

[*The CENTURION signs to the SOLDIER, who wakes the sleeping SOLDIER. Together they fasten*

the other end of the second chain to PAUL's right wrist.]

PAUL. Farewell, beloved physician. Whither I go I cannot hope, nay do not hope to see you yet. But time will bring us all together. Wherefore I pray you, mourn not for me unduly.

LUKE. We shall ever be with you, and you with us. Farewell, last and first of the apostles. [*Kisses him.*]

[*Exeunt the CENTURION, PAUL and SOLDIERS. Footsteps.*]

[*LUKE sits at the table, dazed. At length footsteps are heard approaching. The door opens.*]

JAILOR [*off*] All right, you may go in.

[*TERTIUS enters.*]

LUKE [*rising*] Tertius, you!

TERTIUS. The jailor wouldn't let me in before. Wouldn't even let me say good-bye to the gov'nor. Said it wasn't safe.

LUKE. Nor is it. You had no business to come here, Tertius.

TERTIUS. I couldn't help it somehow, master Luke. Thought there was something I might have done for him, yer know. I hadn't any idea you were here. I wish I'd seen the gov'nor.

LUKE. Parting would have been no easier if you had.

TERTIUS. No, I suppose not. Was there nothing he wanted?

LUKE. Nothing at all.

TERTIUS [*nervously*] Funny how we always offered to do things for the gov'nor when what we really meant was we wanted him to do something for us. What I

mean is, it used always to turn out like that. You or I would come along full of zeal an' 'ero-worship ready to die for him and all that, and before we knew where we were, instead of dying for him, he'd be risking his life for us.

[*Enter JAILOR.*]

JAILOR. You may go now.

LUKE. Have they taken him away?

JAILOR. No, they have not.

LUKE. What, then, have they done with him?

JAILOR. What do you suppose?

LUKE. Here?

JAILOR. Outside in the courtyard. A flash, and all was over.

LUKE. Did he say anything?

JAILOR. Nothing.

LUKE. He has fought a good fight.

[*A pause.*]

TERTIUS [*in great grief*] Master Luke—do you think—anyone will ever know—such loneliness as we shall know from now on?

LUKE. He will always be with us, Tertius.

[*They go. The JAILOR locks the door.*]

THE END

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